

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

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TRSE-00 FEA-02 AGR-20 ABF-01 FRB-03 XMB-07 DRC-01

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7816

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

RUEHBACV EMBASSY CANBERRA 1038

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMCONSUL HONGKONG

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

USMISSION USUN

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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7/13 AF
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CTG SEVEN NINE FOUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 PHNOM PENH 12812

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT PINS PFOR MOPS ECON CB
SUBJECT: KHMER REPORT -- SEPTEMBER 24

GENERAL

1. PUBLIC REACTION TO THE SEPTEMBER 15 PACKAGE OF COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC REFORMS (LAST WEEK'S KHMER REPORT, PARA 10) HAS INITIALLY BEEN SOMEWHAT CONFUSED AND UNCERTAIN, DESPITE A SERIOUS EFFORT BY THE GKR TO EXPLAIN THE RATIONALE AND THE NEED FOR THESE MEASURES. THERE WERE SOME INSTANCES OF MILITARY LOOTING IN PROTECT AT WHAT THE NONINTERVENTION PORTIONS OF THE ARMED FORCES CONSIDERED DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THEM IN FAVOR OF CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. ON SEPTEMBER 22 A MAJOR DECISION WAS TKEN TO BRING THE NONINTERVENTION FORCE PAY SCALES TO A ROUGHT PAR WITH THE CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES, TO BE FINANCED BY REDUCING THE SIZE OF THE FANK PAYROOL TO A FIGURE CLOSE TO FANK'S REAL STRENGTH. AT THE SAME TIME, RECRUITING FOR THE NONINTERVENTION FORCES HAS BEEN HALTED FOR THE TIME BEING IN FAVOR OF AN INCREASED EFFORT TO FILL UP COMBAT UNITS. RETAIL PRICES IN PHNOM PENH ROSE ABOUT 20 PERCENT IN THE WAKE OF THE REFORMS, WHILE FUNK PROPAGANDA DERIDED THE NEW MEASURES, CALLING

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THEM U.S. INSPIRED. PRESIDENT LON NOL ADDRESSED AN OPENING CEREMONY OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON SEPTEMBER 24 WHERE HE DISCUSSED THE ECONOMIC SITUATION, THE UNGA SESSION AND REITERATED GKR READINESS TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE OTHER SIDE. LON NOL'S CONTROVERSIAL YOUNGER BROTHER LON NON RETURNED TO PHNOM PENH AFTER WELL OVER A YEAR OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY, AND HIS PRESENCE ADDED A POTENTIALLY DISRUPTIVE ELEMENT TO THE PHNOM PENH POLITICIAL SCENE. HE

HAS GIVEN LITTLE INDICATION AS YET AS TO WHAT HIS POLITICAL INTENTIONS ARE BUT RIVAL POLITICIANS, REMEMBERING HIS AMBITION AND PENCHANT FOR INTRIGUING, ARE OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED. ON THE MILITARY FRONG, THERE WAS LITTLE OF NOTE DURING THE WEEK. FANK HAS SCORED SOME MODEST SUCCESSES IN THE BASSAC RIVER CORRIDOR SOUTHEAST OF PHNOM PENH, AND THE KC HAVE INCREASED THEIR PRESSURE AROUND KOMPONG CHAM AND KOMPONG CHHNANG.

POLITICAL (INTERNAL)

2. LON NON, THE PRESIDENT'S YOUNGER BORTHER, RE-TURNED TO PHNOM PENH SEPTEMBER 21, EVIDENTLY PLANNING TO STAY. HE TOLD REPORTERS THE NEXT DAY THAT HE WAS READY TO TAKE ANY JOB OFFERED AND ASSERTED THAT HIS DUTY IS TO KEEP HIS BROTHER INFORMED OF "THE REALITIES." LON NON REPORTEDLY ALSO ENVISAGED CUTS IN U.S. MILITIARY AND ECONOMIC AID AND NOTED THAT THE KHMER CANNOT LIVE IN-DEFINITELY ON SUCH AID.

3. CONFUSION HAS BEEN THE INITIAL REACTION TO THE SEPTEMBER 15 ECONOMIC REFORMS. TERRITORIAL TROOPS, HOWEVER, QUICKLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY SUFFERED IN COMPARISON TO INTERVENTION TROOPS AND EVEN CIVILIANS AND CAUSED MINOR INCIDENTS AT SCATTERED LOCATIONS AROUND THE COUNTRY INCLUDING SOME RICE LOOTING IN KOMPONG SOM.

4. THE KHMER TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (AMCEK) DENOUNCED THE NEW MEASURES AS "A CRIMINAL" NON-SOLUTION TO THE PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC SUFFERING DESIGNED SOLELY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CORRUPT. THE UNSIGNED DECLARATION VOTED NO CONFIDENCE IN LONG BORET'S SECOND GOVERNMENT, ASKED

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FOR A REAL SOLUTION TO ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND DEMANDED THAT LEADING CORRUPT FIGURES BE SHOT.

5. AFTER A WEEK'S VACATION THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OPENED ITS THRID SESSION AND ELECTED UNG BON HOR, 44 YEAR OLD DEPUTY FROM TAKHMAU AND FORMER AMBASSADOR TO CUBA, PRESIDENT FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS.

6. PRESIDENT LON NOL HIGHLIGHTED RECENT ECONOMIC REFORMS IN HIS SPEECH TO THE NEWLY REOPENED ASSEMBLY. HE NOTED THAT THE REFORMS ARE NECESSARY AND REALISTIC BUT RECOGNIZED THAT THEY WILL GENERATE IMMEDIATE DISLOCATIONS. HE TOUCHED ON THE GKR-GVN OIL DISPUTE, SAYING THAT ALL NECESSARY LEGAL MEASURES HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN TO GUARANTEE CAMBODIA'S INTERESTS.

REFERRING TO THE UN, LON NOL MERELY EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE
THAT INCREASING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE KHMER
COUASE WOULD LEAD TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE GKR'S
POSITION. THE PRESIDENT REITERATED THE OFFER TO OPEN
UNCONDITIONAL TALKS WITH KHMER ON THE OTHER SIDE.
FINALLY, LON NOL ASKED FOR LEGAL PROVISIONS TO ENABLE
BOTH HOUSES TO SIT TOGETHER AND CONSIDER URGENT
LEGISLATION, ESPECIALLY IN ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS.

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POLITICAL (EXTERNAL)

6. AT THE 29TH UNGA SESSION, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON SEPTEMBER 21 FOLLOWED THE GENERAL COMMITTEE'S EARLIER RECOMMENDATION AND DECIDED WITHOUT OBJECTION, STATEMENTS OR VOTE TO INSCRIBE THE ITEM TO "RESTORE" GRUNK RIGHTS AT THE UN. THE GKR AND ITS SUPPORTERS ACQUIESCED IN BOTH INSTANCES IN LINE WITH PREVIOUSLY AGREED UPON STRATEGY NOT TO FORCE THE ISSUE AT THIS POINT IN A MANNER THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED MORE PROCEDURAL THAN SUBSTANTIVE.

7. ONG KQY TRENG, WHO MAINTAINS HIS PERMANENT RESIDENCE IN MONTEVIDEO, HAS RECEIVED AGREEMENT AS GKR AMBASSADOR TO PARAGUAY. IT WAS ALSO ANNOUNCED DURING THE WEEK THAT PRESIDENT LON NOL HAS GIVEN AGREEMENT TO EDGAR SANCHEZ MATARRITA AS COSTA RICAN AMBASSADOR TO THE GKR, WITH RESIDENCE IN TAIPEI.

GRUNK/FUNK

8. FUNK PROPAGANDA LOST NO TIME ATTACKING IN SEVERAL

RADIO BROADCASTS THE NEW GVN ECONOMIC REFORMS, DESCRIB-
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ING THEM AS "FASCIST AND REACTIONARY" AND IN-
STITUTED AT THE ORDERS OF THE U.S. IT RIDICULED THE
MEASURES AS USELESS, DESCRIBED THE RIEL AS "ALMOST
WORTHLESS", BUT ADMITTED THAT "THE CLIQUE CAN SURVIVE
A LITTLE LONGER" DESPITE ITS ALLEGEDLY DESPERATE
STATE. THE BROADCASTS APPEALED TO THOSE UNDER GKR
CONTROL TO STRENGTHEN THEIR EFFORTS NOW TO OVERTHROW
THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT WHICH IS EXPLOITING THEM.

9. IN OTHER BROADCASTS, COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA CON-
TINUED TO ATTACK PRESIDENT FORD, REFERRING TO THE
AMNESTY OF MR. NIXON, "HIS FORMER MASTER", AS CREAT-
ING A SCANDAL THAT HAS "PLACED HIM IN A PILLORY"; DE-
VOTED SEVERAL BROADCASTS TO THE PUNISHMENT ALLEGEDLY
METED OUT BY THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE TO "U.S. MILITARY
ADVISORS" IN PHNOM PENH RESTAURANTS AND WHILE RIDING
IN CYCLOS; CONTINUED TO BOAST ABOUT CPNLAF RAINY
SEASON SUCCESSES, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY ATTACKING THE
"RUTHLESS" KHMER AIR FORCE BOMBING RAIDS NEAR SIEM REAP.

10. GRUNK FOREIGN MINISTER SARIN CHHAK (SEE LAST
WEEK'S KHMER REPORT) WAS RECEIVED IN SOMALIA BY PRESI-
DENT SIAD. HIS VISIT WHICH ENDED SEPTEMBER 18 RE-
CEIVED MODERATE PRESS COVERAGE THERE.

11. SIHANOUK MET IN PEKING WITH MAURITANIAN PRESI-
DENT DADDAH ON SEPTEMBER 18.

ECONOMIC

12. PRICES ROSE ABOUT 20 PERCENT IN PHNOM PENH RE-
TAIL MARKETS DURING THE WEEK FOLLOWING THE ECONOMIC RE-
FORMS OF SEPTEMBER 15. THE RETAIL PRICE FOR U.S. RICE
WENT FROM 126 TO 250 RIELS PER KILO IMMEDIATELY FOLLOW-
ING THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A TRIPLING IN THE OFFICIAL RICE
PRICE (FROM 57 TO 165 RIELS PER KILO), BUT SUBSIDED TO
200 RIELS PER KILO BY SEPTEMBER 23. BATTAMBANG RICE
ROSE FROM 275 RIELS TO 400 RIELS DURING THE WEEK, AN IN-
CREASE OF 45 PERCENT. CHARCOAL ROSE BY 50 PERCENT DURING
THE WEEK, PERHAPS BECAUSE IT IS AN ALTERNATE SOURCE OF
COOKING FUEL, REFLECTING THE HIKE IN THE OFFICIAL PRICE
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OF KEROSENE FROM 70 TO 180 RIELS PER LITER. THE BLACK MARKET PRICE FOR GASOLINE INCREASED TO 450 - 500 RIELS PER LITER, COMPARED TO A NEW OFFICIAL PRICE OF 350 RIELS PER LITER, BUT GASOLINE WAS GENERALLY AVAILABLE AROUND THE CITY. DESPITE THE RATHER SUBSTANTIAL OVERALL INCREASE IN PRICES, SOME COMMODITIES SHOWED MORE MODEST GAINS OF AROUND 10 PERCENT DURING THE WEEK, SUCH AS FISH, PORT, BEEF, POULTRY, FRUITS, SUGAR AND SOME VEGETABLES.

13. THE BLACK MARKET EXCHANGE RATE DECLINED FROM 1,270 RIELS PER DOLLAR ON SEPTEMBER 13 TO 1,220 ON SEPTEMBER 23. BY COMPARISON, THE OFFICIAL BUYING RATE ON SEPTEMBER 23 ON THE NEWLY-FORMED FREE MARKET WAS 1,280 RIELS PER DOLLAR. BUYING ACTIVITY AT THE COMMERCIAL BANKS WAS MODERATE. SELLING ACTIVITY WAS INITIALLY LIMITED TO NORMAL TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING FOREIGN TRAVEL, STUDENTS ABROAD, ETC. SINCE GUIDELINES FOR IMPORTS HAVE NOT YET BEEN ISSUED BY THE GKR.

14. ON SEPTEMBER 24, THE GKR DECIDED TO INCLUDE IN THE ECONOMIC REFORM PROGRAM AN EXTRA 4,500 RIELS PER MONTH FOR NONINTERVENTION TROOPS. THIS INCREASE CORRESPONDS TO THAT PROVIDED FOR CIVILIAN GKR EMPLOYEES. (SEE MILITARY SECTION BELOW)

15. ON SEPTEMBER 19, AMBASSADOR DEAN AND ACTING MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HOU HONG, SIGNED AN AGREEMENT INCREASING CIP BY \$18.5 MILLION, BRINGING THE TOTAL THUS FAR FOR FY 1975 TO \$23.6 MILLION. DURING THE SAME CEREMONY A NOTE WAS PRESENTED TO THE GKR EXPRESSING U.S. INTENT TO DEPOSIT ANOTHER \$1 MILLION IN THE EXCHANGE SUPPORT FUND. WITH THIS ACTION THE U.S. CONTRIBUTION WILL TOTAL \$9.75 MILLION THUS FAR FOR CY 1974.

16. FOLLOWING AGREEMENT ON A LOAN OF 40,000 TONS OF RICE FROM VIETNAM, A FIRST CONVOY HAS ALREADY DELIVERED 2,629 M/T OF RICE TO PHNOM PENH. IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE ENTIRE AMOUNT WILL BE DELIVERED WITHIN THE NEXT THIRTY DAYS.

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MILITARY

17. THE MAJOR EVENT OF THE WEEK IN MILITARY AFFAIRS
CAME IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE SEPTEMBER 15 ECONOMIC RE-
FORM PACKAGE, ONE OF THE OBJECTIVES OF WHICH HAD BEEN TO
FIND WAYS TO INDUCE RECRUITMENT IN OR TRANSFER TO THE
COMBAT UNITS RATHER THAN THE NONINTERVENTION FORCES. THE
RESULT OF THE INITIAL PAY SCALES ANNOUNCED WAS TO FIVE
THE INTERVENTION UNITS A SIZEABLE PAY INCREASE, FOLLOWED
BY THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, WITH THE NONINTER-
VENTION FORCES, THE MOST NUMEROUS GROUP IN THE ARMED
FORCES, COMING IN THIRD. FURTHER STUDY OF THE
PROBLEM CONVINCED FANK OF THE INEQUITY OF OFFERING NON-INTER-
VENTION TROOPS LESS THAN THE CIVILIANS. AN OFF-SETTING ALLOWANCE
INCREASE IS TO BE FINANCED BY REDUCING TOTAL FANK PAYROLLS BY
SOME 30,000 TROOPS. FANK IS PROBABLY BELOW ITS AUTHORIZED STRENGTH
OF 253,000 BY AT LEAST THE AMOUNT OF THIS REDUCTION.
PRELIMINARY REPORTS INDICATED THAT THIS EQUALIZING STEP HAS LARGELY
SUCCEEDED IN DEFUSING THE PROBLEM OF MILITARY DISCONTENT.
AS A COROLLARY TO THE PAY RAISE AND DECREASE IN TOTAL PAY-
ROLL STRENGTH, FANK DECIDED TO SUSPEND FOR THE TIME
BEING ALL RECRUITING FOR NONINTERVENTION UNITS IN
FAVOR OF A GREATER EFFORT TO RECRUIT FOR THE DEPLETED
COMBAT UNITS.
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ATTACKS OVER A TWO-DAY PERIOD BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 16
FORCED ARMED VILLAGERS, AUGMENTED BY TERRITORIAL FORCES
CADRE, TO ABANDON SEVEN SMALL OUTPOSTS WEST OF KOMPONG
CHHNANG. BY SEPTEMBER 19 THE GOVERNMENT FORCES HAD RE-
PORTEDLY STABILIZED THEIR DEFENSES. THE GENERAL STAFF
IS REINFORCING KOMPONG CHHNANG WITH AN ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER
SQUADRON. THE KC CUT ROUTE 5 NORTHWEST OF KOMPONG CHHNANG
SEPTEMBER 23 AND ARE PRESSURING FANK POSITIONS NEAR THE
CUT.

19. KOMPONG CHAM CONTINUES TO SUFFER ALMOST DAILY ENEMY
GROUND ATTACKS AND ATTACKS BY FIRE INCLUDING TWO 105MM
HOWITZER BARRAGES.

20. IN THE BASSAC RIVER AREA A SUCCESSFUL FANK AMPHIB-
IOUS ASSAULT FORCE SEPTEMBER 18 LANDED ON THE NORTH BANK

OF THE BASSAC FLANKING THE ENEMY, WHO TOOK HEAVY CAUAL-TIES AND TEMPORARILY FLED THE AREA. GOVERNMENT FORCES FAILED TO EXPLOIT THEIR SUCCESS AND THE ENEMY REGROUPED AND SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED FURTHER FANK INITIATIVES. TWO AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULTS ATTEMPTED SEPTEMBER 20 WERE DRIVEN OFF BY ENEMY ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADE FIRE. OTHER FRIENDLY UNITS IN A SUPPORTING OPEATION MET STIFF ENEMY RESISTANCE IN SPITE OF MASSIVE ARTILLERY AND AIR PREPARATIONS AND FAILED TO REACH THEIR OBJECTIVE ON THE BASSAC RIVER.

21. FANK'S THREE-BATTATION OPERATION TO REOPEN ROUTE 4 TO DAS KANCHOR HAS PROGRESSED SLOWLY OVER THE LAST WEEK. THE 28TH BRIGADE HAS SUFFERED MODERATE CASUALTIES; GKR FORCES AT TALAT HAVE GIVEN A GOOD ACCOUNTING OF THEMSELVES, KILLING 33 OF AN ATTACKING ENEMY FORCE ON SEPTEMBER 20. THE ENEMY CONTINUES TO HARASS THAT TOWN WITH LIGHT GROUND ATTACKS AND ATTACKS BY FIRE.

22. IN BATTAMBANG, ALTHOUGH THE KOH KRALOR GARRISON IS STILL ENCIRCLED, THE ENEMY HAS BEEN VERY QUIET OVER THE WEEK. NEWLY PROMOTED BRIGADIER GENERAL HIN NIM IS PERSONALLY COMMANDING A 1,000-MAN RELIEF FORCE IN A TWO-PRONGED ATTACK; THE FORCE IS APPROXIMATELY SIX KILOMETERS NORTH
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OF KOH KRALOR AND HAS SO FAR ENCOUNTERED LITTLE ENEMY ACTIVITY.

23. NORTHWEST OF PHNOM PENH STIFFENING ENEMY RESIST-ANCE HAS STALLED FRIENDLY UNITS OF A THREE-TASK-FORCE OPEATION NEAR TUOL LEAP. ON ONE OCCASION THE 493RD BATTALION HAD ENEMY WITHIN ITS DEFENSIVE PERIMETER AND ENGAGED IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT TO EXPEL THEM. THESE FRIENDLY UNITS ARE NOW DIGGING IN AND ARE CONFIDENT THAT THEY CAN HOLD THEIR POSITIONS.

24. ONLY ONE OF FOUR 107MM RICKETS FIRED AT THE CAPITAL SEPTEMBER 24 REACHED THE CITY LIMITS CAUSING LITTLE DAMAGE.

25. THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE ACTIVITY ON THE RIVERS DUR-ING THE WEEK AS TWO MEKONG CONVOYS ARRIVED IN PHNOM PENH ON SEPTEMBER 19 AND SEPTEMBER 24. IN ADDITION, ONE CON-VOY BROUGHT RICE AND POL TO KOMPONG CHAM ON SEPTEMBER 23 AND ANOTHER CARRIED FIVE M-113S TO KOMONG CHHNANG ON SEPTEMBER 22. ALL CONVOYS GOT THROUGH WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE.
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